Report Cites Mineral King Revenue, Costs

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Tulare County can expect to receive from $1.5 million to $1.9 million annually in tax revenue from the development of a scaled down resort at Mineral King.

Based on anticipated cost figures in reports submitted by 14 Tulare County departments, the county would expend more than $610,000 per year supporting the development.

However, a socio-economic report prepared by the Tulare County Planning Department, in which the costs are compiled, points out the $610,000 figure is "deemed low . . . " by other information contained in the report.

The detailed research document submitted by county planners to the United States Forest Service will be studied by forest officials and will be used to update a final environmental impact statement (EIS) now being prepared.

The final EIS will be completed by the forest service some time in December.

The report prepared by the county was based on a proposed scaled down version of the Disney development in which maximum daily usage by visitors would be approximately 5,000 per day.

But the report noted "at no time did the staff review or have access to finished drawings of project design proposals" of Disney's scaled down version of development.

The new Disney proposal calls for improving the existing roadway from Hammond to Silver City for use by private vehicles and construction of a smaller village at Silver City instead of on the valley floor.

Some type of small scale trans-

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Mineral King Report Issued

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portation would be used to move skiers and other visitors into the valley where nine lifts would be in operation.

The original proposed development called for 18 ski lifts to be built on the mountainsides at Mineral King.

In a letter of transmittal sent to Peter Wyckoff, a recreation land staff officer for the forest service, King Patrick Leonard, division head for the county's environmental section, said extensive research had been completed by the planning staff on the impact of the project.

But he added the "staff was unable to carry the analysis and conclusion to a satisfactory point."

The planning department began compiling its report in mid-August and submitted it to the forest service Thursday after less than one month's work.

The report said there would be "significant" social and economic impact on the tiny foothill community of Three Rivers.

"In economic terms, the revised Mineral King project will have a significant impact on property owners — both in the Oak Grove-Silver City area and the community of Three Rivers," the report said.

The report noted that land owners in the area may experience a decrease in the county's property tax rate, but the assessed valuation of the property will climb if Disney's project is given the go-ahead by federal district court.

Of the 19,503 acres of land owned by private individuals, 28 per cent is owned by residents of Southern California and other areas of the nation.

Slightly more than 48 per cent of the land is owned by people in Three Rivers while Visalia area residents own 23 per cent of the land.

A large amount of land is owned, however, by such firms as Riverway Ranch Enterprises of Van Nuys, Associated Southern Investment of Long Beach, McCullough Investment Enterprise of Salt Lake City, Utah and the Ideal Cement Co. of Denver, Colo.

The staff report said property owners in the Three Rivers area have had to carry a high tax burden on undeveloped land since 1965 when the Disney proposal was first made public.

But the report said " . . . this burden will continue until the Disney development is completed. Even then, the staff is unsure as to whether the revenue from the Disney development will compensate the taxpayer for the previous years — 1965-75."

If the development is given the go-ahead, visitors to Mineral King will not find it cheap.

An analysis prepared by planners estimates the cost for one person to spend two days and one night skiing at Mineral King will range from $61.60 to $85.60.

To use the ski facilities for the day — including meals and the rental of ski equipment — the cost could average from $20 to $23 per person. Days costs would be about $10 less if the skier supplies his own equipment and food.

Cost for summer use would be considerably lower, but expenses for two days and one night at the Disney lodge during the summer months would average from $33.60 to $56.60 per person.

These figures do not include the cost of transportation or other items purchased at the resort or during the course of a trip.

The report briefly discussed the possible environmental damage to Tulare County due to increased air pollution, decreased water quality due to runoff from subdivisions, sedimentation and increased population.

But it concluded these areas were "nebulous" since no dollar loss figure could be arrived at in a cost-revenue analysis.

Businessmen in Visalia and Porterville would benefit from increased traffic as visitors stopped to eat, spend the night or purchase supplies on their way to Mineral King.

There would be additional tax revenue collected by the cities with little extra expenditure for government services, the report said.